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General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Thursday, 23 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to congratulate you very warmly, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I assure you of our full support as you carry out your noble work. I also wish to extend my congratulations and encouragement to all the members of the Bureau.

I would also like to recognize the commitment of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose tireless efforts to make the United Nations a strong, working and credible Organization reflects his faith in the ideals of peace, development and concord among peoples. We must now continue to breathe life into these ideals, so that current and future generations will have a peaceful and safe world, a world without absurd hatred or gratuitous violence. This vision should lead us to re-invigorate the values of multilateralism and universality that are epitomized by our Organization. In other words, the world needs now, more than ever, a United Nations that is strong and strengthened in its legitimacy.

We welcome, therefore, the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General to establish a panel of eminent persons on threats, challenges and change, whose conclusions will be presented next December. In this respect, we recall the African position on reform of the Security Council, which advocates among other things, the assignment to Africa of at least two permanent seats and two extra non-permanent seats. Africa would choose the recipients of those seats according to a process that has yet to be determined.

As I extol universality, I feel it is unfair that the Republic of China on Taiwan, with its 23 million inhabitants, its major democratic system and its impressive economic vitality, would still be sidelined from the work of the United Nations, whose Charter does rightly enshrine the essential principles of justice and universality.

This denial of justice also affects the valiant people of Palestine, who, under the legitimate authority of President Yasser Arafat, have been deprived of its fundamental right to sovereignty and ongoing existence. The defiant attitude of the occupying Power vis-à-vis the international community, recently illustrated by the Israeli authorities' refusal to abide by the opinion of the International Court of Justice requiring Israel to immediately stop the illegal building

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of the separation wall in Palestinian territory, imperils the foundations of international legality. I solemnly appeal to the international community and, in particular, to the members of the Quartet, asking them to persevere in their efforts for an immediate resumption of dialogue, so that we may achieve a fair, equitable and lasting solution to this disagreement. The peoples of Palestine and Israel, needless to recall, are condemned by history and geography to live together.

For our part, Senegal, which chairs the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will continue, with its people, to unfailingly support the Palestinian people, battered by this crisis that has lasted far too long. As a contribution to the quest for peace, I suggested that we conduct a special meeting, outside our regular work, on the situation in Palestine aimed at enhancing the work launched by the Quartet and in the spirit of the road map, in order to establish by 2005 a sovereign and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with the State of Israel, within safe and internationally recognized borders guaranteed for the two States. This initiative, which has already been endorsed by the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union, will provide an opportunity to mobilize the international community around the effective implementation of the road map.

In awarding me yesterday the 2004 Human Rights Award, the International League for Human Rights in fact honoured, through Senegal's head of State, all of the Senegalese people, a people attached to freedom and to the respect of human dignity. My Government will continue to work to promote and protect human rights, the rule of law and good public and private governance. In talking about human rights, I am naturally thinking of the fundamental rights of women, children, disabled persons, seniors and all vulnerable people. This deep commitment to mankind motivated my decision to submit draft legislation to the Senegalese national assembly to abolish capital punishment in Senegal.

Almost 60 years after the establishment of our Organization, our world, which is so fragile, still sees longstanding dangers such as nuclear proliferation and the emergence of new dangers such as terrorism and AIDS, which represent a serious threat to international peace and security. I must remind Members here of the need to do more to strengthen, under the leadership of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, the mechanisms that already exist for cooperation and technical assistance in order to provide those countries who so wish human, technical and adequate financial resources to combat terrorism. This initiative, of course, must be paired with States' increased adherence to treaties and protocols in this key area. It is for this purpose that the African Union adopted last July an additional protocol to the Organization of African Unity's Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, proposed by Senegal on 17 October 2001 at the African conference on terrorism, held in Dakar.

This collective approach should also be adopted to tackle the difficult problem of small arms and light weapons. Senegal supports making the moratorium on the importation, exportation and production of small arms and light weapons of the Economic Community of West African States into a convention in West Africa, since these arms are truly weapons of mass destruction in our subregion.

There are other destructive scourges. I would like to speak about AIDS. In accordance with the declaration that we adopted in 2001, we must act more quickly and more vigorously in critical areas such as prevention and access to antiretroviral treatments if we really do wish to stop this disease and its devastating effects. Since antiretroviral medication is now free for all those who are afflicted, thanks to our tenacity, Senegal has remained a success story in combating AIDS.

Another seemingly ignored ill is poliomyelitis, which we have completely eliminated in Senegal. However, this scourge remains as serious as ever in the rest of Africa.

During this second trimester of 2004, the North and West parts of Africa have witnessed the invasion of swarms of locusts, the dreaded scourge which has infested large agricultural areas in the region of the Sahel and some North African countries. This threat, which has already destroyed entire civilizations, is now compromising the lives of tens of millions of people right before harvest time. At the very beginning, I personally sounded the alarm, speaking to the international community in Rome last March. Despite another appeal by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), assistance was late in coming and is only now under way, but in ways that are not very effective.

Whatever the case may be, Senegal has begun to work on this issue, and today we are succeeding in containing this danger. Together with neighbouring countries, the countries bordering the Sahel, we are trying to launch an extensive campaign for the final elimination of these locusts. In this regard, we note with great satisfaction the involvement of African countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Libya and Egypt in this issue. Today, our people remain concerned about the possible migration of these locusts, carried by the wind, to other areas in the region, in particular to the Maghreb. We are also pleased to announce that we have received substantial support by the World Bank, among other international organizations. This means that we have a shared responsibility to strengthen and mobilize the international community against locusts and, if we succeed in saving the crops, to completely eliminate them, starting at their source.

The task at hand in this area should not make us lose sight of the huge field of work that remains to be tackled, namely combating the poverty that strikes millions of people throughout the world, in particular in the least developed countries so that we can achieve the Millennium Development Goals in terms of agriculture. I must say here that I am satisfied with the outcome of the meeting that was held on the initiative of President Lula, the President of Brazil.

Yet we all see and are concerned that, as has been emphasized by the Secretary-General and others, in spite of the relative improvement in the economic situation in Africa since 1995, the chances of our continent achieving the Millennium Development Goals are still rather low given the lack of progress to date. Implementation of those Goals is particularly at risk even at a time when the world economy is progressing in an encouraging way: Africa continues, mainly because of the export subsidies of developed countries, to be marginalized in world trade. It is a truism to say that those subsidies help to impoverish African producer countries and increase unemployment.

Another problem is the thorny issue of African debt. The continent has dedicated itself to resolution of this problem: next year we will hold a major summit preceded by a technical meeting on ending Africa's indebtedness.

The Extraordinary Summit of the African Union on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, just held in Ouagadougou on 8 and 9 September, illustrates our continent's determination to continue to devote special attention to the fight against unemployment, which is a key priority for development. A successful outcome — in keeping with the outcomes of the various summits which have given direction to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) — requires the international community to make a stronger commitment, alongside Africa, to help materialize this important partnership programme. And that is why I say that I am pleased to see the progress we have made on NEPAD financing since the Group of Eight (G-8) meeting in Kananaskis, Canada.

Although insufficiently highlighted, efforts for African development made under NEPAD and the support actions of the international community — particularly those taken by the G-8 and the United Nations system — are still in evidence, which pleases me. We have made basically two proposals. The first has to do with the convening in Senegal's capital of an agricultural forum, on the model of the Davos economic forum, for the purpose, inter alia, of closing the world agricultural gap. It will be held in February 2005 in Dakar.

The ever-growing digital divide separates the developed countries from the developing countries. In December 2003 in Geneva, the Secretary-General convened The World Summit on the Information Society. On that occasion, Africa proposed, through myself, the idea of digital solidarity among peoples and the establishment of a digital solidarity fund based on volunteer efforts and not funded by any mandatory tax. That idea was received with unanimous enthusiasm by developing countries — Africa, Asia, Brazil, the Middle East — and by a developed country: France. Subsequently, the inaugural congress for the United Cities and Local Governments organization was held in Paris in May 2004; participants officially announced their participation in the digital solidarity fund. To the cities already mentioned elsewhere, I could add Rome, Paris, Lille and Bilbao.

We are pleased that the Secretary-General has established a task force on financing the information society under the decision adopted at Geneva. Providing Africa with the hardware and other computer technology it needs is the only way to give us access to the knowledge that accelerates development and, which, in turn, will help to close the digital divide.

As members can see, the challenges we face are enormous, numerous and pressing. The time has come to strengthen the foundations of international cooperation and, once and for all, to exorcize the risk of social bipolarization throughout the world where affluence rubs elbows with the most extreme poverty and where the values of solidarity and respect for the sacredness of human life become vain words. That is why I suggested that we hold an international conference in Dakar on an Islamic-Christian dialogue, whose objectives would be to help us better understand one another, to strengthen peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians and to promote a dialogue among cultures.

Thus, by hosting the eleventh Islamic Summit in 2006, Senegal, which has a majority Muslim population living in perfect harmony with their Christian brothers, will continue its action to promote fruitful inter-religious dialogue focused on the sacrosanct principle of respect for the cultural and religious identities of all peoples.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Cyprus.

Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Papadopoulos: I wish, Sir, to express to you my most sincere congratulations on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in steering the work of this body. I would also like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, especially for his inspired efforts to promote so vigorously the agenda of United Nations reform and the revitalization of the General Assembly.

As this is the last session of the General Assembly before the 2005 major event, we must proceed to evaluate the prospects for attaining the ambitious targets we set at the turn of the millennium. The major event will be the first real assessment of our progress towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, of the outcomes of major world conferences and of initiatives such as the action launched by the Presidents of Brazil, France and Chile and the Prime Minister of Spain to eradicate poverty and hunger, and the initiative of the Presidents of Finland and Tanzania on the social dimensions of globalization.

Specifically with regard to the Millennium Development Goals, we believe that the ability to make development on the ground an issue of global concern as a result of those pledges will be a measure of the ability of the United Nations to induce significant change and advances where they are most needed.

The Republic of Cyprus supports the strengthening of the United Nations system through the reform process that is under way and looks forward to the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and the recommendations of the Secretary-General. We attach particular importance to the revitalization of the General Assembly and to the reform of the Security Council so that its structure will reflect contemporary political realities and a more balanced geographical representation. In the spirit of those two principles, and with the aim of reinforcing the legitimacy and efficacy of the Council, Cyprus is supportive of increasing both the permanent and the non-permanent membership. In that respect, we believe that the joint French and German position on the enlargement of the Council could provide a basis for achieving the aforementioned objectives.

We share the assessment of the Secretary-General that consolidating effective multilateralism in a flexible and versatile United Nations is the best way to address the complete spectrum of global crises and ensure that preventive mechanisms exist to avert such crises. Such consolidation applies also to security deficits and particularly terrorism, whose underlying causes we have been unable to eliminate despite our concerted efforts. We consider that the conclusion of a

comprehensive United Nations convention against terrorism is important in order to address more resolutely, within the framework of international legality, the threat posed by terrorism.

Addressing other deficiencies in the international system — particularly those that give rise to crisis situations and to humanitarian disasters — should also be considered a matter of both urgency and priority. One such crisis is Darfur, which, following many others like it, keeps Africa at the heart of our concerns. It demonstrates not only why we should focus the majority of our humanitarian resources and peacekeeping efforts on Africa, but also why we should undertake every possible effort to make sustainable development a global reality.

The Middle East is another region that remains volatile, despite growing global concern and despite many attempts to restore the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We deem to be necessary more active involvement by the Quartet in the efforts to implement the road map and put an end to the cycle of violence. More emphasis should also be placed on the task of improving living conditions in order to normalize people's lives to the greatest possible extent. Our support remains focused on ending the occupation, achieving a just and viable settlement based on United Nations resolutions, and the realization of the Palestinian people's aspirations for the establishment of an independent State, living side by side with Israel in conditions of sustainable peace and security.

The aspirations of humanity revolve around the achievement of full respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The collective vision and effort required to fulfil that massive endeavour demands the contribution of all, to the extent of their capabilities. Cyprus is prepared to play its part from its vantage point in the European Union, while drawing upon its traditional participation in forums dedicated to promoting agendas pertaining to those values. That affiliation has been a source of support for us since Cyprus's independence, and its impact not only makes us grateful but also has endowed us with sensitivities that will continue to be an integral part of our approach.

I would like to emphasize how proud we are that Cyprus is now a member of the European Union. The Union has outlined an extensive set of priorities for this session of the General Assembly. As the statement delivered Tuesday by the Dutch presidency has delineated those priorities, I will not elaborate on them any further.

This year marks 30 years since the occupation of 37 per cent of Cyprus's territory as a result of the invasion of the island by Turkish troops. It also marks 30 years of relentless efforts by the Greek Cypriots to achieve a just and peaceful settlement, with the support of the international community, for which I would here like to express our deep appreciation.

The Secretary-General's most recent effort to solve the Cyprus problem resulted in a plan that was described by some as a historic opportunity to solve one of the most long-standing international problems. I will outline only briefly why, despite the hard work invested in the process by everyone involved, the end product of that effort was judged to have been inadequate and to have fallen short of minimum expectations for a settlement for Greek Cypriots.

First, the Annan Plan was not the product of negotiation, nor did it constitute an agreed solution between the parties. Secondly, the Plan did not place the necessary emphasis on achieving a one-State solution with a central Government able to guarantee the single, sovereign character of Cyprus. Thirdly, it failed to address the serious concerns of the Greek Cypriot community regarding their security and the effective implementation of the Plan.

In rejecting the Plan as a settlement for the Cyprus problem, the Greek Cypriots did not reject the solution or the reunification of their country; they rejected this particular Plan as not effectively achieving that objective. We remain committed to a solution that will ensure the reunification of our country, its economy and its people.

We are committed to reaching a solution on the basis of a bizonal, bicommunal federation. There are, however, a number of essential parameters on which the Greek Cypriot community insists such a solution must be founded: the withdrawal of Turkish troops and settlers and respect for the human rights of all Cypriots, the underlying structures for a functioning economy, the functionality and workability of the new state of affairs, the just resolution of land and property issues in accordance with the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, and respect for the right of return of refugees. To that end, we welcome the recent Pinheiro progress report on the restitution of

property in the context of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Simultaneously, it distresses me to bring to the attention of the Assembly that certain provisions of the Annan Plan have encouraged the unprecedented unlawful exploitation of properties in occupied Cyprus that belong to Greek Cypriots.

The most paramount feature of any settlement is the ability to instil a sense of security among the people. In that regard, the mistakes of the past must not be repeated. Cyprus must, in its future course, proceed without any grey areas with regard to its sovereignty or its relations with third-party States. If the people feel that their needs have not formed the basis of any solution that has been reached or that the characteristics of that solution have been dictated by the interests of third parties, then that solution will, unsurprisingly, be rejected. Indeed, in spirit and in practice, effective multilateralism not only encompasses but also derives from the comprehension and consideration of local realities and particulars, on which it must then proceed to formulate proposals.

In the framework of the European Union, and with the aim of promoting reunification and reconciliation, my Government — despite the obstacles created by the current status quo — is consistently pursuing policies aimed at enhancing the economic development of the Turkish Cypriots. We believe that such policies, while not intended to serve as a substitute for a solution, are the most effective way to foster maximum economic integration of the two communities and to increase contact between them, so as to ensure the viability of a future solution.

The Cyprus problem is not always perceived in its correct context. The fact remains that this problem is the result of a military invasion and of the continued occupation of part of the territory of a sovereign State. That fact should not be conveniently overlooked by concentrating on peripheral matters. Any initiative to solve the problem must have at its core that most basic and fundamental fact and must be based on the premise that international legality must be served and the occupation ended.

Unfortunately, the fundamentals of the situation on the ground have remained unchanged for the past 30 years, since the Turkish invasion in Cyprus. That situation comprises severe violations of the most fundamental human rights. The still-unresolved issue of missing persons — an issue of a purely humanitarian nature — and that of the enclaved of the Karpass peninsula are in themselves an indication of the enduring suffering of Cyprus. That not only should point us towards the specifics of the solution to be pursued, but also must guide our actions with regard to managing the status quo. For instance, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), assigned the task of managing the status quo inflicted 30 years ago, should remain specific to the situation on the ground.

The accession of Cyprus to the European Union, in conjunction with the lack of an agreement aimed at settling the Cyprus problem — despite our efforts and our preference for a settlement prior to accession — signifies the end of one era and the beginning of a new one.

I firmly believe that the new context defined by the accession of my country to the European Union and by the expressed will of Turkey to advance on the European path offers a unique opportunity and could have a catalytic effect in reaching a settlement in Cyprus. Our vocation is to be partners, not enemies.

Hence, in this new era, we call upon Turkey to join us in turning the page and in seeking ways to discover mutually beneficial solutions to the various aspects that compose the Cyprus problem. The mere realization that peace and stability in our region serve the interests of both our countries is ample evidence to prove that what unites us is stronger than what divides us.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana

The President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to

the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mogae: Let me start by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Your election is a tribute not only to yourself, but also to your country, Gabon, with which Botswana enjoys the most cordial of relations. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your onerous duties and responsibilities.

We also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia, for his stewardship of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Saint Lucia is another country with which Botswana enjoys excellent relations. Come to think of it, we can understand why countries of the world can be friendly with each other, as Botswana is friendly to them all.

Our words of congratulations are addressed also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his visionary leadership of the Organization and for his enduring spirit in the face of the complex challenges that the United Nations is called upon to address across our common universe.

I take this opportunity to join other delegations in extending our condolences to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation on the tragic loss of life in Beslan. There can never be any justification for such a savage attack on innocent children, men and women. Botswana joins the rest of the international community in condemning that horrendous act.

We also extend our sympathies and condolences to our dear brothers and sisters in the Caribbean and the southern part of the United States of America on the loss of life and the destruction of property caused by recent hurricanes.

We are gathered here today, 12 months before the first review of the Millennium Declaration, an unprecedented compact made by world leaders to unite in action in addressing the problems bedevilling humanity. It is our hope that we will use this gathering to reflect on whether we have done enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We have to ask ourselves, individually and collectively, whether the enthusiasm and political commitment with which we endorsed the Declaration is being translated into programmes and projects. Simply put, we must be ready to answer, hopefully in the affirmative, whether we are doing enough to meet the targets that we set for ourselves for the first five years of this millennium.

Let us recall that pessimists proclaimed the Millennium Summit a talking shop and poured scorn on its intended outcome. Are we doing enough to prove them wrong? We owe it to the millions of our people who look up to us to mitigate their suffering. Thus far, the available evidence suggests that our performance has been disappointing. Unfortunately, time is not on our side. There is need to act with vigour if we are to meet our commitments.

My delegation is fully aware that a multiplicity of factors combined to constrain and to thwart some of our efforts in the past few years. There is no doubt, for instance, that major international conflicts, such as the war in Iraq, have been a drag on the international community's efforts to focus on the Goals. As a result of the war, oil prices have skyrocketed, putting tremendous pressure on the world economy, and in particular on the vulnerable economies of developing countries.

In spite of those challenges, we have abiding faith in the human spirit, and therefore remain convinced that it is not beyond the capacity of the international community to implement those ideals.

The Millennium Declaration recognized that poverty eradication is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, but many of our people still live in conditions of abject poverty. The alleviation of poverty and its eventual eradication therefore remain a top priority for us. Official development assistance levels continue to fall in real terms to below the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product. I must, however, commend the few countries that have met that target. They have demonstrated that the target is realistic and achievable.

The continuing debt burden is contributing significantly to the failure to deal effectively with the problem of poverty. Most developing countries have undertaken courageous measures to implement painful structural reforms. The commendable steps taken to introduce sound macroeconomic management and principles of good governance deserve an urgent, positive and appropriate response. It must be acknowledged that some of the reforms can, in the short term, worsen the plight of the poor for a very long time before the benefits of the sacrifices are realized.

Structural reforms have not been confined to budgetary matters alone. They cover the whole economic spectrum, including the creation of an environment conducive to the growth of the private sector and development, as well as to the flow of foreign direct investment. A number of developing countries have promulgated legislative and regulatory frameworks to stimulate greater private sector participation in their economies. It is only natural, given the scope of the reform measures, that developing countries should expect some positive reaction in the form of flows of foreign direct investments, which at the moment are, regrettably, still very low.

In the area of trade, we are concerned about the slow progress in multilateral trade negotiations. As developing countries, we have more to gain from a more just, fairer and rule-based international trading system that would facilitate the integration of our economies into the global economy. We urge the major players in those negotiations to show a greater sense of urgency and commitment.

We are concerned at the fact that, in spite of the strong commitments expressed at the Millennium Summit, almost half of the people in sub-Saharan Africa continue to survive on a dollar a day. That reflects no change in the statistics of 1990. One hundred twenty-one million children are still out of school; and the under-5 mortality rate is still as high as 174 per 1,000 live births.

The resources provided to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic remain inadequate, yet we all agree that HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS must therefore remain a high priority for action, because the epidemic has a debilitating impact on everything that we do to improve the human condition. In 2003, it was reported that about 40 million people around the world were living with the virus, and that well over 26 million of them were in sub-Saharan Africa alone. The epidemic has killed over 2.3 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, out of a total of 3 million people who died of AIDS-related illnesses around the world.

In Botswana, our various intervention programmes are beginning to bear fruit. We are indebted to our friends internationally, whose partnership, support, assistance and, indeed, solidarity have combined to save lives and give hope to many of our people. However, a lot still needs to be done. Our immediate challenge is the lack of capacity to provide the antiretroviral therapy programme to all who need assistance. We shall therefore continue to rely on the international community for consistent and assured support, if we are to assist our people in time.

International peace and security are under constant threat. Our collective memory appears to be failing to draw appropriate lessons, even from the recent horrors of conflicts in Rwanda, Afghanistan and the Balkans. Millions of people continue to suffer and die needlessly in Africa and elsewhere because of unnecessary conflicts. It is once again Africa that has had to bear the brunt of those conflicts.

We are concerned by the protracted conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire. As Africans, we accept our responsibility to find solutions to those conflicts. That is why we established the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in May of this year. In its short history, the Council has already deployed peacekeepers in Burundi and peace monitors in the Darfur region of Sudan, and has sent mediators and peace envoys to help in negotiating solutions to conflicts elsewhere on the continent.

One thing is clear: Africa is an integral part of the international community. The problems of Africa are global problems. We cannot isolate ourselves, nor be isolated from the rest of the world, and be expected to single-handedly find solutions to such conflicts. We need consistent and continued international support. In that regard, we acknowledge the important and commendable role that the United Nations is playing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi.

The peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a critical stage. The international community has a duty and a responsibility to assist the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the search for national reconciliation and a lasting political settlement to the problems facing that country. It is our hope that the international community will provide the necessary financial and material support to ensure the success of the international conference on the Great Lakes region, which is to be held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, at the end of this year.

In Côte d'Ivoire, everything possible must be done to maintain peace and stability, as well as to promote national reconciliation, by ensuring that the parties accept the Government of National Reconciliation.

Regarding the situation in the Darfur region of Sudan, the international community must take urgent measures to arrest the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in that country. The people of Darfur should be assisted to return to their homes in safety and dignity. We urge the Government of Sudan to be receptive to the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report and, above all, take due cognizance of Security Council resolution 1564 (2004), and in particular to facilitate the speedy delivery by the international community of much-needed humanitarian assistance.

We are troubled by the escalating conflict in the Middle East, which is a serious threat to international peace and security. How long can humanity stand the sight of human suffering that we see daily on our television screens? For how long can generations of mothers mourn the loss of their sons in combat? For how long should succeeding generations fight wars that their forebears fought? We ask those involved in those conflicts, descendants of old civilizations that made enormous contributions to the growth and development of modern civilization, to live and let live and to find in themselves the courage to resolve their differences through dialogue rather than through indiscriminate violence.

Terrorism is one of the greatest challenges to international peace and security. No one country can defeat that scourge, which has caused the loss of many lives across the world. The activities of terrorists have become very complex and sophisticated. We need united, stronger and concerted action by all the countries of the world to defeat that scourge, which knows no boundaries.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the importance that Botswana attaches to the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council. We commend the President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly for his practical proposals in that area. We were disappointed that the Assembly could not reach consensus on those proposals. My delegation will contribute in whatever small way it can to the building of such consensus.

Regarding the reform of the Security Council, we are concerned that, after 11 years of consultations, not much progress has been achieved. The solution to that vexing question rests on the ability of Member States, in particular the permanent members of the Council, to muster the political will to compromise. We should not tolerate this paralysis any longer. It is therefore my hope that action will be taken at this session to continue the process of democratizing the Security Council and make it more representative of the membership of the United Nations.

Finally, I once again make a special appeal to the general Membership of the Organization to do more to facilitate the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. We must do all we can to transform hope into reality. Together we have the resources, the skills and the science and technology to make the Declaration have meaning in the lives of our peoples. Botswana is committed to doing its part.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank the President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Obasanjo: On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, and in my capacity as the current Chairman of the African Union (AU), I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I assure you of the support and cooperation of Africa, of which

you are an illustrious son. I would also like to express appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency The Right Honourable Julian R. Hunte, Minister for External Affairs of Saint Lucia, for the dedication and skill with which he presided over the affairs of the fifty-eighth session. I commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his effective leadership and for his efforts to maintain the status of the United Nations in the face of enormous global challenges.

Nigeria remains unshakeable in its commitment to and support for the strengthening of the United Nations and the protection of its cherished ideals, in particular the maintenance of international peace and security and cooperation among States to resolve international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. The problem posed by the unremitting conflicts in various regions of the world and the increasingly difficult task of finding solutions to them continue to pose serious challenges to the world body.

Nigeria and the African Union (AU) commend the United Nations for its determined engagement in crisis resolution and peacekeeping, particularly in Africa. We have noted with appreciation the changes in the concept of peacekeeping. Nevertheless, we believe that some improvements are still necessary to enable United Nations peace operations to address the social and economic challenges that inevitably confront countries emerging from conflict. Those socio-economic issues invariably form an important part of the original causes of the conflict.

We also appeal for continued enhancement of the capacity of regional organizations to undertake initiatives on crisis resolution in their respective regions. For its part, the African Union has worked to improve its Mechanism for Conflict Resolution, and in May this year established a Peace and Security Council.

The first challenge the AU Peace and Security Council has faced has been the situation in the Darfur region of western Sudan, which aroused world attention because of the reported carnage there. On behalf of the AU, I want to thank the international community for the humanitarian intervention being undertaken. As is well known, the AU has deployed troops to the region to monitor a ceasefire between the Government of the Sudan and the opposing movements — the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and the Justice and Equality Movement. Moreover, the first substantive peace talks took place under the auspices of the AU in the Nigerian capital of Abuja from 23 August to 18 September 2004. At that meeting, the Sudanese parties reached agreement on the first of the four points on the agenda, namely, humanitarian issues. They also made progress on the second point, security issues, before adjourning for consultations. A follow-up meeting is expected to be convened in Abuja around 21 October 2004 on the other issues: political and economic and social issues. I am closely following the developments, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union and others, and I now call upon the international community to continue to lend us its support in resolving the Darfur conflict and its consequences.

It is cheering to note the progress being made in Somalia, particularly in constituting the Parliament. The efforts of the regional countries, which are demonstrating unprecedented collaboration in helping the Somalis to move the process forward, should be applauded. The Somalis themselves must continue to demonstrate their commitment to repair past errors and to make their country a respectable member of the AU and the United Nations.

The Great Lakes region remains a flash point of violence, as exemplified by the recent massacre of more than 150 persons in a refugee camp in Burundi. On 25 June 2004, President Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and President Kagame of Rwanda met in Abuja at my invitation and agreed to activate the Joint Verification Mechanism. Thereafter, with the participation of the Secretary-General, a meeting of all stakeholders was held during the third African Union Summit, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 6 to 8 July 2004, in order to accelerate the activation of the Joint Verification Mechanism. I am hopeful that this renewed process will facilitate a better understanding of how to stem the spate of massacres and engender a peaceful resolution of the protracted crisis in the Great Lakes region.

With regard to the West African subregion, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are continuing their efforts, with the constant support of the United Nations, to ensure steady progress in the peace processes in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. To that end, and in order to address the standstill in the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement on Côte d'Ivoire, an extraordinary summit was held under ECOWAS auspices in Accra, Ghana, on 29 July 2004. The

meeting benefited from the presence of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and some non-ECOWAS African heads of State. If the agreements reached at that summit are faithfully implemented, an end to the conflict should be in sight.

In the margins of the Accra summit, we also addressed problems that were retarding the implementation of the Liberian Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In discussions with all the Liberian leaders, we agreed decisions on the main issues, and we have since witnessed encouraging signs that those decisions are being implemented.

Here, I should like to remark once again that the delay in providing the resources promised by countries during the Liberian pledging conference held at United Nations Headquarters in February 2004 constitutes an avoidable hindrance to the advancement of peace in Liberia. I therefore call on all our well-meaning partners who were kind enough to make pledges to kindly redeem them.

While the United Nations is justifiably seized of the issue of weapons of mass destruction — such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons — the question of small arms and light weapons can no longer be ignored. While the threat of weapons of mass destruction is awesome, small arms and light weapons are killing people every day at a rate that, cumulatively, amounts to monumental destruction. Nigeria and the African Union welcome the commencement of negotiations on a legally binding international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons globally. Of particular interest to Africa is the enormous potential that such a legally binding instrument can have on peace and security in our region. We should therefore not relent in our efforts.

Let me take this opportunity to soundly condemn the totally unacceptable role of mercenaries and their sponsors in Africa. The recent attempted invasion of Equatorial Guinea and other such attempts go against every imaginable rational effort at promoting stability and democracy on the continent. We call on the United Nations to join the African Union in sending the right signals of condemnation to those mercenaries and their sponsors.

Our quest for global peace and security will prove unsuccessful unless we intensify international cooperation for development and the reduction of poverty. Just four years ago, we adopted the Millennium Development Goals, which pointedly fixed the target of reducing by half the number of those living in poverty by 2015. Yet by now, the alarm is being raised that, if present trends continue, that target may not be met, particularly in Africa, which aside from the challenges of development, is also being ravaged by pandemic diseases.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union as its current Chairperson, I should like to assure the General Assembly that we Africans are determined to exert all our efforts to overcome those obstacles to development that are within our control. To that end, we are pursuing, with the personal commitment and involvement of our heads of State and Government themselves, the implementation of the priorities set out in our flagship programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In that context, we appreciate the conclusion in the Secretary-General's second consolidated report on progress in implementation and international support for NEPAD that

> "African countries have demonstrated their commitment to advancing the implementation of NEPAD by earmarking financial allocations to selected sectoral priorities." (*A/59/206, para. 67*)

The report also concludes that

> "The development partners of Africa can give further practical expression to their support for the efforts of African countries by taking action in three important areas: first, by creating an enabling international environment that is supportive of growth and development in Africa; second, by bringing much needed coherence to trade, aid and debt policies, so that African countries are the net beneficiaries of international actions in those areas; and third, by undertaking concrete measures to accelerate the implementation of NEPAD by making significant financial outlays to fund the key sectoral priorities of NEPAD." (*ibid., para. 68*)

I believe that the message to our development partners is very clear. To demonstrate our commitment to the principles of good governance, transparency and the rule of law, 23 African countries have already subscribed to the African Peer Review Mechanism. It should be recalled that the Mechanism represents

Africa's voluntary commitment to a set of performance codes and standards to foster best practices and share lessons in the management of national affairs. The promotion of agriculture is being vigorously pursued both for its export potential and for poverty alleviation. Encouraging growth rates in agricultural production are already being recorded in several African countries. Simultaneously, we are intensifying our efforts in the promotion of agro-based industries.

To further our efforts at self-help, the heads of State and Government of the African Union held the Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 5 to 9 September 2004. We adopted a far-reaching declaration and programme of action. We also adopted mechanisms for implementation and monitoring at the national, regional and continental levels.

What may act as an obstacle to implementation in this most important area for lifting the African population out of poverty and misery is the inevitable issue of having adequate resources for meeting our otherwise realistic goals. On behalf of the African Union, I appeal to our partners to act once again in the interest of our shared, common global interdependence and common humanity.

Africa requires a genuine partnership anchored on the principle of mutual benefits to ensure the attainment of sustainable development. One area of partnership concerns Africa's external debts. The negative impact of debt on the economic situation of African countries, particularly the least developed countries, can no longer be denied. We remain convinced that comprehensively resolving the lingering debt crisis through innovative action would brighten the prospects of development in Africa.

Africa welcomes the consensus that emerged from the recent meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in São Paulo, Brazil. That consensus reflects a shared conviction that the Organization can continue to coordinate our views on trade and development matters. This cannot be otherwise if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved and the benefits of expanding trade are to be enjoyed by all peoples and societies.

By launching a new initiative to commence a new round of multilateral trade negotiations, developing countries have issued a challenge to our development partners to exploit global opportunities for growth and development. We hope they will respond.

Africa remains committed to the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria, tuberculosis and related diseases. Since the last series of high-level plenary meetings on implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, we have taken bold steps to deal with the pandemic. Towards that end, we in Nigeria have established a national scientific institute for research on HIV/AIDS and intensified public awareness programmes. In that connection, we welcome the outcome of the recent International Conference on HIV/AIDS in Bangkok, Thailand. We thank the United Nations agencies and all stakeholders for their collective efforts to stem the spread of the disease worldwide.

With regard to other deadly preventable diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, polio and whooping cough, my Government has stepped up its efforts. In a few days, on 2 October 2004, my Government will once again embark on a polio immunization programme, in coordination with six African States — Chad, the Sudan, Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire — to ensure maximum effectiveness. These are countries where polio has been reported fairly recently. Significantly and symbolically, the programme's launch, with all my brothers and colleagues present, will take place in Kano.

Last year, the Secretary-General launched a United Nations reform initiative that we all warmly commended. In pursuit of that initiative, the Secretary-General appointed last year a high-level Panel of Eminent Personalities to examine ways of strengthening the United Nations through institutional reforms and processes. We are looking forward to the report of the Panel. Nigeria — and indeed the rest of Africa — holds the view that the Security Council should be expanded in its permanent and non-permanent categories to make it more representative, more effective and more acceptable. We hope that those regions of the world that are not currently represented in the permanent membership category will be given membership. Africa, whose issues occupy a substantial part of the Security Council's time, ought to be accorded priority consideration for permanent membership, and Nigeria, I strongly believe, is a well-qualified candidate.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Singh (India): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. May I assure you of India's full support in ensuring its success.

As we gather here in the sixtieth year since the United Nations was founded, we might perhaps pause to reflect on the fate of the ideas and ideals of the international community that inspired its creation. The post-war generation had already become aware that the world which had emerged from the ashes of a global war could no longer be a peaceful world unless the underlying forces of conflict were addressed effectively by the entire community of nations as a collectivity. Nations were therefore united to make the world a safer and more peaceful place — a world in which free peoples could pursue together a destiny of shared prosperity.

The impulse behind the creation of global institutions nearly 60 years ago has become an even more pressing reality today. If we look around us, the single most defining characteristic of our contemporary world is the global, transnational character of the challenges we confront, whether these are in the realm of international security or in that of development. Virtually every major issue that we face as nation-States has both a domestic and a transnational dimension. It is becoming increasingly apparent as never before that, unless we fashion a global response to those challenges based on a meaningful consensus, we will not succeed in creating a world that truly manifests the ideals of the United Nations.

Terrorism is one such challenge for which many of us have paid an unacceptable price. We shall not forget that, three years ago, it was this great city that witnessed the single most horrendous terrorist act in human history. Approximately three weeks ago, in Russia, the world saw another brutal act of terror which took the lives of hundreds of innocent civilians, including a large number of young children.

Terrorism exploits the technologies spawned by globalization, recruits its foot soldiers on ideologies of bigotry and hatred, and directly targets democracies. And yet, it is a sad reality that international networks of terror appear to cooperate more effectively among themselves than the democratic nations that they target. We speak about cooperation, but we often seem hesitant to commit ourselves to a truly global offensive to root out terrorism with the pooling of resources, the exchanging of information, the sharing of intelligence and the unambiguous unity of purpose that is required. That must change. We do have a global coalition against terrorism; we must now give it substance and credibility, avoiding selective approaches and political expediency.

I now turn to other challenges that we face today, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. There is an increasing reliance on restrictive regimes and on the use of punitive action to confront this threat to international peace and security. Although India is firmly opposed to proliferation and has an impeccable record in that respect, we believe that it is only a global consensus of willing nations that will ultimately prove to be truly effective in that regard.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a good model to follow with respect to other weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. It is through representative institutions, rather than through exclusive clubs of privileged countries, that we can address global threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. As far back as 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi outlined a series of specific steps in an action plan, whose central proposition remains valid even today — that progressive steps towards the elimination

of weapons of mass destruction must be based on a balance of obligations between those who possess such weapons and those who do not.

It is quite evident today that a global discourse is required for evolving a more cooperative and consensual international security order. India believes that such consensus must differentiate between States whose actions strengthen non-proliferation and those that weaken the realization of its objectives.

Let me now turn to the central theme for the vast majority of United Nations Members; the challenge of development and the eradication of mass poverty. Globalization has undoubtedly brought enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in the functioning of our economies. It has integrated marketplaces, higher standards of living and a revolution in global connectivity.

But there is also the phenomenon of widening economic disparities, both within and among countries. Connectivity also means that the people are painfully aware — in real time — of how far and how fast they are falling behind in their relative living conditions. Development today is no longer a function of domestic resources and national policies alone. It is a process that is vitally linked to the international economic environment that the developing countries face.

The international community must find ways to contract those circles of exclusion. We need to find innovative sources of financing and access to new technologies that are necessary to assist those who are on the margins of globalization. Just as prosperity cannot be sustained by being walled in, poverty cannot be banished to some invisible periphery. Development must therefore return to the centre of the global discourse. We must evolve equitable and rule-based regimes to manage global trade, investment flows and the movement of services.

Four years ago, at our Millennium Summit, we adopted ambitious global development goals, but it is a matter of concern that we have already fallen behind in their implementation.

While globalization has generated new challenges, it has also given us new technologies to deal with those massive challenges. The world faces ominous pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, but it today also possesses remedies and skills that can rid the world of that scourge. We face problems of environmental degradation in many parts of our planet, but we also have available safe and environment-friendly technologies.

Many countries are beset by problems of hunger and malnutrition, but we possess modern techniques of food production and processing to make a hunger-free world a credible and realistic dream. Although our excessive dependence on hydrocarbons raises concerns about the long-term availability of energy and about the security of supplies, technology has made available many environmentally sound alternative technologies. What we lack, however, is a truly global agreement and a mobilization of the international community to overcome the massive challenges.

The experience of the decades since the inception of the United Nations demonstrates the great significance of democracy as an instrument for achieving both peace and prosperity. While it is gratifying that the frontiers of democracy have expanded dramatically in the last decade and a half, they still exclude significant numbers.

Only a few months ago, in India's fourteenth general election, our country went through the largest exercise of popular will in the world. I can therefore assert with confidence, the importance that national articulations in global forums have in truly reflecting the democratically expressed will of their people. We choose to overlook the absence of democracy in too many cases for reasons of political expediency.

Democracy's representative nature validates the commitments we take on as countries; it should also determine the manner in which the architecture of international institutions evolves. What is required for the international community to successfully deal with global challenges — whether they be security challenges, economic challenges or challenges in the sphere of the environment — is the existence of international institutions and a culture of genuine multilateralism.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies are the only instruments available for responding effectively to the challenges we face collectively. But what is missing is our sustained commitment to democratizing the functioning of the United Nations.

It is common knowledge that the United Nations is often unable to exert an effective influence on global economic and political issues of critical importance.

That is due to what may be called its democracy deficit, which stands in the way of an effective multilateralism based on a democratically-evolved global consensus.

Therefore, reform and restructuring of the United Nations system can alone provide a crucial link in an expanding chain of efforts to refashion international structures, imbuing them with a greater degree of participatory decision-making so as to make them more representative of contemporary realities.

Our Millennium Declaration recognized the urgency of the reform of the United Nations Security Council. An overwhelming majority of the world's population cannot be excluded from an institution that today legislates on an increasing number of issues, with an ever-widening impact. The expansion of the Security Council, in the categories of both permanent and non-permanent members, and the inclusion of countries like India as permanent Members would be a first step in the process of making the United Nations a truly representative body.

I would like to make brief references to two countries with which India has had historically friendly ties and whose early return to political normalcy is the focus of the world's attention.

The situation in Iraq causes us great concern. The United Nations has a central role to play in erasing the discord of the recent past and in ensuring that the Iraqi people can soon exercise effective sovereignty, preserving the country's unity and territorial integrity. An end to the suffering of the Iraqi people and recognition of their aspirations should be the guiding objectives. Consistent with our longstanding ties of friendship with the Iraqi people, India will contribute to Iraq's humanitarian and economic reconstruction.

In the past three years, the international community has assisted Afghanistan in pulling back from the brink of chaos and chronic instability. We sincerely hope that the upcoming presidential elections and the subsequent parliamentary elections will allow the Afghan people to express their will, free from interference and intimidation. India's assistance to Afghanistan's reconstruction and development will continue.

Relations between India and Pakistan have been a matter of attention for the international community. It is known that in January this year India and Pakistan initiated a composite dialogue to resolve all issues, including that of Jammu and Kashmir. I reaffirm our determination to carry forward that dialogue to a purposeful and mutually acceptable conclusion.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm India's commitment to the principles that have brought us together in this Organization. Those principles retain their relevance and validity even while the global economy and the international political order pose new and very different challenges. All of us have to grow out of the comfort of the predictable, discard constraining habits of thought, and move forward with confidence to meet the demands of the present and the future. Each of us has to be prepared to take on new obligations and larger responsibilities relevant to the needs of our time.

I deem it a privilege to say unhesitatingly that India is conscious of the responsibilities that lie ahead. I speak of an India on the move — on the cutting edge of economic, technological and developmental transformations. This is an India endowed with outstanding human resources, and we are putting in place policies which will respond to emerging and critical tasks. We have the capabilities and capacity to take these on, and to participate in the restructuring of a just and dynamic world order. We are confident that, in the inextricably interdependent world we live in, our commitment to the common good, which this Organization embodies, will be resolute and full.

In this, we are inspired by the vision of internationalism bequeathed to us by India's first Prime Minister, the great Jawaharlal Nehru — a vision of a world order whose pillars are peace, harmony, cooperation and development. That vision needs to reanimate the collective wisdom of the world community for a new partnership to meet the unprecedented challenges we face.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of India for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Joschka Fischer, Deputy Federal Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Fischer (Germany) *(spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation)*: Let me first of all congratulate you, President Ping, on your election and wish you every success in your responsible post, and express my sincere thanks to the outgoing President for his dedicated work.

I endorse the statement of the Netherlands European Union presidency.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the world is changing at dramatic speed. In just a few decades, humanity will have reached the 8 billion mark. With the networking of world trade and with global communication technologies, we are growing ever closer. We are going to become increasingly interdependent in economic, technical and ecological terms.

At the same time, we all face a host of new challenges and new dangers which threaten us all — the South and the North, the developing and the developed world alike.

On the one hand, there are threats to national and global security such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the nuclear threat, the danger posed by failed States or, as we all painfully remember in this city, by terrorism, which does not respect humankind or human dignity.

On the other hand, there are also so-called soft threats, such as far-reaching environmental and climatic changes, poverty, major shortfalls in education and training and the negative aspects of globalization, refugee flows, and diseases and epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. They are a threat to security and stability and take a heavy toll.

The two — hard and soft threats — are closely connected. After all, we know that the causes of war and violence, poverty, need and oppression are multifaceted and deep-rooted. We also know that crises are the fruit of poverty and a sense of hopelessness, and vice-versa. We will have no peace without development, nor indeed development without peace, so we have comprehensively to secure peace and stability — above all through economic and social development.

The States of the world have to work together to shape economic, technological and ecological globalization and rise to the resulting challenges. They will not be able to do so without close cooperation. Indeed, that is now beyond the tools of traditional diplomacy alone. Their ability to secure and stabilize the international system on their own will in future prove less and less adequate.

What we need is a far-reaching reform of the international system and its institutions that takes due account of these changes. That is a reform we need urgently, because we have to create an effective multilateral system which enables us to work together to prevent crises and, where that does not work, find long-term solutions.

There have already been promising developments at the regional level. With their sometimes painful history very much in mind, the States of Europe have joined together in the European Union and thus have reached a new level of multilateralism. This political and economic community, now embracing 25 States, has become an anchor of stability for Europe and beyond.

Since its foundation the African Union has been impressively shouldering its shared responsibility for preventing humanitarian disasters and resolving major regional conflicts. This is a courageous and key step forward. This breakthrough of multilateralism on the African continent will develop an ever more pronounced dynamism.

Given global interdependencies and connections, we need a world organization that has close links to these regional structures and can thus boost the efficiency of joint action. The United Nations is the most important forum for setting global rules. Its might is the might of the right, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his impressive speech at the opening of this General Assembly session. With its legitimacy we have a unique and universal competence for solving problems together. Since the breaking of the internal blockade caused by the cold war, the United Nations has been playing an increasingly significant role. The international community is making more and more use of it as a forum for tackling the major challenges facing humanity.

For millions of people today the Blue Flag means quite tangible help, often on essential issues, and hope for a better future. For this, we are all very much indebted to the Organization and its staff. They are on the ground in many crisis regions in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

It is becoming ever clearer that different approaches must be found to prevent or resolve each

individual crisis. The commitment of the United Nations in all crisis areas is the proof. In Afghanistan and in the Balkans, in Haiti and in the Great Lakes region the United Nations is already making a considerable contribution. But we must realize that there will not be fewer conflicts in the future, and the demands made of the Organization will grow.

Against this backdrop the question arises whether the structures given to the United Nations at its foundation almost sixty years ago are still suited to this mandate, whether its work enjoys the international acceptance it needs. In particular, the disputes concerning the Iraq crisis highlighted this problem once again.

We are convinced there is no alternative to a world acting multilaterally. To make this multilateral cooperation sustainable and capable, we need a courageous and comprehensive reform of the United Nations that faces up to the challenges we are facing.

It was the Secretary-General himself who took the initiative, and for this we extend our thanks. To that end, he appointed a panel of high-level international experts who are to present him with reform proposals at the end of the year. We look forward to that report and the ensuing debate with great interest.

What is at stake is a new, shared understanding of the Charter system. How can we shape prevention to make it more effective, and peace-building to make it more sustainable? How can we further implement the proposals on the reform of peacekeeping? What exactly do we understand by the right of self-defence? How do we define terrorism? The answer to this question in particular seems clear, yet real agreement would take us, the international community of States, a step forward.

A number of very concrete proposals on the reform of the United Nations institutions have already been presented. Let me therefore outline some thoughts on this matter.

I want to start with the General Assembly. It is the central organ of the United Nations, the only one with universal membership. For this very reason, the Assembly has to be more than an annual forum where we just go through the motions. What we need to do first is focus our topics more carefully. We have to discuss the truly crucial issues — otherwise, essential questions will be dealt with in other forums. Secondly, we need more efficient working methods.

The Economic and Social Council has to finally become the central organ in the United Nations system for consultation and decision-making on economic and social issues. We believe that the Council has at two levels vast potential that has yet to be fully tapped. On the one hand, that body maintains a network of expertise unequalled in the world. We have to make better and more targeted use of it. On the other hand, we see the Economic and Social Council as a partner for the Security Council for peacekeeping, as laid down in Article 65 of the Charter. When it comes to fighting the causes of conflicts and to post-crisis rehabilitation, the Economic and Social Council has an important role to play that can support Security Council efforts for conflict prevention and peace-building. We should grant the Economic and Social Council more competences in the operative sphere.

After all, the efforts we make in peace missions will be successful only if the military commitment is followed by a longer phase of stabilization, and very often that phase turns out to be the most difficult one. The Economic and Social Council advisory groups on post-crisis rehabilitation in Africa are a step in the right direction. That is what the decisive link between conflict management and development cooperation could indeed look like.

Such an all-embracing approach needs appropriate financial resources. The instrument of voluntary contributions has proven insufficient in everyday life, and therefore I propose earmarking a certain share of the United Nations peacekeeping budget for post-crisis rehabilitation. This means we could achieve what we have long been trying, a "prevention share", which — let us remember Haiti — could help us save the costs of conflicts flaring up again.

Many criticize the proliferation of subsidiary and subordinate organizations of the United Nations. Of course, a reduction cannot be an end in itself. But we ought to exercise enough self-criticism to ask ourselves whether it would not be better to pool competences in some cases.

However, there are also spheres that need to be better equipped. I am thinking here, for example, of the handling of environmental issues in the United Nations system. We thus support the proposal made by French President Jacques Chirac last year to upgrade the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to a specialized agency with universal membership. That

could considerably strengthen UNFP's contribution to sustainable development.

At the heart of the reform of the United Nations is the organ shouldering the central responsibility for international peace: the Security Council. Conflicts are on the increase. They stretch across all continents, and they are growing in complexity. In turn, the responsibility and competences of the Council have expanded constantly. Crisis prevention will play an increasingly important role. And for peace-building, ever more comprehensive strategies, closer cooperation and additional resources will be needed. This will mean more and more decisions that entail long-term obligations, create new international law and make major inroads into State sovereignty.

If we really want Security Council decisions to be accepted as legitimate and implemented effectively, we have to reform the Council. It has to more broadly represent a world organization that today embraces more than 191 countries. That is inconceivable without increasing the number of seats — for permanent and non-permanent members alike. The reasons behind such a move speak for themselves.

A Council with more members would enjoy greater acceptance internationally as a basis for greater authority. The more balanced and comprehensive representation of all continents — also among the permanent members — would lead to a better sense of ownership of the Security Council for all States. Similarly, an enlargement would considerably bolster the motivation of the new Council members to make a long-term contribution to realizing the goals of the United Nations.

The enlargement must adequately reflect sea changes such as decolonization, the end of the cold war and globalization. The composition of the Council must ultimately mirror the current geopolitical reality. That means that all major regions of the South must be represented by permanent members in the Security Council. At the same time, account has to be taken of Members that can and want to make a particularly meaningful and sustainable contribution to maintaining world peace and international security and to realizing the purposes of the Organization. That twofold approach would increase the Council's efficiency and its ability to act and to assert itself.

For 40 years, the composition of the Security Council has remained unchanged. I believe it is high time to adapt it to the new global reality. Half-baked or interim solutions are neither necessary nor helpful. Like Brazil, India and Japan, Germany too is ready to take on the responsibility associated with a permanent seat in the security Council. But it is especially important to us that the African continent be represented among the new permanent members.

A second aspect also has to be taken into account in Security Council reform. All in all, a greater number of Member States that are engaging themselves in the work of the United Nations should be able to get more involved in the work of the Security Council. For that to happen, additional non-permanent seats also have to be created. That would mean that the balance between permanent and non-permanent members could be retained.

As I said before, United Nations reform will be the central and defining theme of this General Assembly session. I thus call upon Member States: let us use the fifty-ninth session, right up until the next session in 2005, to launch the overdue reforms and achieve tangible results. We, the Member States, have to muster the political insight, the will and the creativity to adapt the Organization to the global reality. Germany is ready to make a committed contribution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Silvan Shalom, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Mr. Shalom (Israel): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Gabon, upon your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish you much success.

The United Nations was established out of the devastation of the Second World War in order to build a world of unity and of peace. Today, 60 years after the Organization came into being, we must ask ourselves: What are we united for and what are we united against? Are we united for peace and security? Are we united for fairness and justice? Are we united against terror? Are we united against tyranny?

Or are we, sadly, united only in cynical and immoral majority votes that make a mockery of the noble ideals on which this body was founded? Tomorrow is Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, when all Jews stand before God to account for their actions. It is an appropriate time for all

nations, separately and together, to engage in such an accounting.

I sense a change in the world. In the face of the global campaign of terror which has left no country free of its devastating impact, the world is beginning to realize what we in Israel have long known: that terrorism is a challenge to humanity as a whole, not just to individual countries; that the response to that global threat must also be global if it is to be effective; that the threat of terrorism anywhere is a threat to freedom everywhere; that fighting terror is crucial to our ability to bring peace.

There was a time when the problems of terror, Islamic fundamentalism and Iranian nuclear ambition were seen as local problems — Israel's problems — not challenges which threatened the community of nations as a whole. Today, however, our community of nations is more united than ever in the battle against terrorism, whose sole objective is to undermine everything that we seek to build: peace, stability, prosperity and opportunity for all.

Today we are also more united than ever in opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The international community now realizes that Iran — with missiles that can reach London, Paris, Berlin and southern Russia — poses a threat not only to the security of Israel, but to the security and stability of the whole world. Indeed, Iran has replaced Saddam Hussein as the world's number-one exporter of terror, hate and instability.

The international community now also realizes, as reflected in Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), that Syria's occupation of Lebanon and its support for Palestinian terror must end if our collective aspirations are to be fulfilled.

And the international community now realizes that terror and tyranny are the twin enemies of the individual freedoms and human rights — including the right to life itself — which define our humanity.

Today, the community of nations knows that securing freedom and democracy for all the peoples of the world must be our collective goal. The pictures of human flesh torn apart by the terrorists, from New York to Beslan — and just yesterday, once again, in Jerusalem — are waking us up to the challenge we face.

In that spirit of unity, and in the name of all those in the world who suffer from terror and tyranny, I call on the Assembly to refocus its aspirations and its priorities. I call on the Assembly to end its obsession with Israel and to ensure that United Nations resources are allocated more equally and more effectively. Our United Nations must provide solutions to the global challenges of hunger and poverty, of disease and weapons proliferation, of drug trafficking and sustainable development. We must not let the Palestinian desire to vilify Israel distract our global community from the obligation to address the needs of all peoples.

I call on the Assembly to address head-on the active involvement of Iran and Syria in terrorism and Syria's continued occupation of Lebanon. There can be no place in the community of nations for those who promote the killing of children. I call on the Assembly to promote practical measures to help nations cut off all financial and political lifelines of terror.

I call on the Assembly to address the growth of anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and intolerance. I urge you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General, to convene a special session of the Assembly on that crucial matter. We all share the responsibility to educate our children to understanding and tolerance rather than to hatred and incitement.

We must build a united and global coalition to fight terrorism, racism and anti-Semitism. We must build a united front against the cold-blooded murderers of our children. In that battle, there is no middle ground. There is no room for explanations or excuses. There are no mitigating circumstances. Declarations and condemnations are very important, but they are not enough. Every nation, every Government, every leader has the responsibility to act. Those who choose instead to support and sponsor terror must be isolated and held to account for their crimes.

When I speak of terror and its dangers to life and freedom, I speak from bitter personal experience. My own home town of Beersheva suffered a double suicide bombing just three weeks ago. Sixteen innocent people were killed when their commuter buses were blown up. In the middle of an important meeting with visiting officials, I rushed to call my mother and brother to check that they were alive. Hamas, which operates freely from Palestinian territory and receives support and safe haven from the regimes in Damascus and Tehran, proudly claimed responsibility for that horrific attack.

Again yesterday, as I was meeting with the Secretary-General to discuss peace in the Middle East, I was passed a note informing me of a suicide atrocity, in which two more Israelis were blown to pieces by a Palestinian terrorist. And this morning, once again, yet more Palestinian murderers took the lives of three young Israelis in an attack on Morag.

In the last year alone, 150 Israelis have been killed and thousands more injured in more than 40 separate suicide bombings and other cold-blooded attacks. More than 200 additional suicide-bombing attempts were blocked by our defensive measures.

No Israeli mother is free of the fear that her child may be lost. No Israeli child is immune to the terrorists' plans. In the name of God above and all humanity here on Earth, this killing must stop.

Palestinian terrorism is the key reason that the dream of peace in the Middle East has not yet become a reality. Combating this terror is crucial to the prospects for peace in our region. No peace initiative can survive if terrorists continue to enjoy a free hand to undermine it.

The road map recognizes this, calling, in phase one, for sustained Palestinian action against terror, the dismantling of terrorist organizations and the end of incitement in schools and the media. Sadly, the current Palestinian leadership has refused to fulfil those fundamental obligations, preferring to blame Israel for all its failures. The Palestinian side spends more energy fighting Israel here at the United Nations than it does fighting the terrorists in its own territory.

In the post-11-September world, this is not acceptable. The Palestinians are not exempt from the imperatives of the global war on terror. On the contrary, it is in their clear interest to join it. To stand up against Hamas and Islamic Jihad is to stand up for Palestinian rights, not against them.

We urge the international community to recognize this reality and help the voices of reform and moderation within Palestinian society to emerge. The future of the Palestinian people will be determined by the choices that the Palestinians and their leadership make on the ground. The solutions — for the Palestinians and Israelis as one — lie in Gaza and Ramallah, not in The Hague or New York.

Israel is acting in both the diplomatic and the security arenas to deal with the consequences of this chronic failure of the Palestinian leadership. On the diplomatic front, Israel accepted the road map in May 2003, and we remain committed to its realization. At this time, however, we have no responsible Palestinian partner ready to join us in this effort. Israel is now planning to implement the disengagement plan as a means of enhancing security and establishing a new, more promising platform for a return to negotiations. We are in constant contact with the donor community and the World Bank in a joint effort to rebuild Gaza in the wake of Israel's withdrawal.

On the security front, Israel is building a security fence to stop the unchecked wave of Palestinian attacks. After 20,000 terrorist attacks, we deserve to protect our people. No other country would act otherwise after 20, let alone 20,000, terrorist attacks. The fence does not take lives. It saves them. Where there is a fence, there is no terror. Where there is no fence, there is terror. The modified route of the fence reflects the necessary balance between the security of our citizens and the welfare of the Palestinian population, as called for by Israel's Supreme Court. Most important, the fence is reversible. The lives taken by terror are irreversible. By helping take terrorism out of the equation, the fence contributes to the prospect of a return to negotiations and the realization of the road map's vision of peace.

I call on the Assembly to acknowledge this truth and to reject the continued Palestinian effort to have delegations address Israel's response to terrorism, instead of addressing the terrorism itself.

Ultimately, we need real contact and dialogue, based on mutual respect for the humanity of the other if we are to resolve the conflict in the Middle East. The Government of Israel is ready for such contact. We are ready to talk to any leadership — from Syria, Lebanon or the Palestinians — that comes to the table without terror and with the genuine intention of finding mutually acceptable solutions to our differences.

Tomorrow, Yom Kippur, is a day of prayer, fasting and soul-searching for the Jews. In Beersheva, in a synagogue named after my father, I will be praying together with those who have recently buried their murdered children. I will pray that our collective aspiration for life and freedom will prevail over the terrorists and those who sponsor them. I will pray that God will deliver peace on earth, for all humanity. And I will pray that mankind can unite — through the

United Nations — to help make this dream become a reality.

And I would like to say in Hebrew, Happy New Year.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Albert Shabangu, Deputy Prime Minister of Swaziland.

Mr. Shabangu (Swaziland): Allow me to convey to all members of the United Nations family the warm greetings and best wishes of His Majesty King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and, indeed, the entire Swazi nation.

The Kingdom of Swaziland congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this session. We are especially proud that a fellow African has been elected to that demanding position, and we are confident that your diplomatic skill and experience will help you to lead the Assembly towards a successful conclusion of its deliberations.

In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, the world is understandably preoccupied with the question of security and the war on terror. The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to condemn, in no uncertain terms, terrorism which constantly threatens world peace, security and stability. As part of our support for the alliance against terrorism, the Government of Swaziland is currently studying the United Nations conventions that deal with terrorism, to ensure not only the adaptation of such important conventions, but also compliance with them. The Parliament of the Kingdom of Swaziland will be debating, and will hopefully pass, its long-awaited anti-terrorism bill during its next session.

Future world stability is also threatened by the continuing spread of weapons of mass destruction. Our failure as an Organization in that regard thus far is due to inability to agree on a time frame suitable to all Members for arms control and nuclear disarmament.

The Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) were designed as an essential first step towards a world free from the danger that such weapons pose. We clearly need to find a way to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and to prevent the flow of conventional weapons and anti-personnel landmines into zones of conflicts or into the hands of terrorists. The Kingdom of Swaziland therefore calls upon the Conference on Disarmament to implement the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement by establishing, as its highest priority, an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on a programme for the complete and time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons from those countries that have them.

While the possibility of global conflict has diminished since the end of the cold war era, it is a fact that there has been a corresponding increase in the incidence of internal conflicts and cross-border disturbances, arising from a variety of causes, including ethnic and religious confrontation.

The situation in the Middle East is inevitably at the centre of the debate on peace and security. The Kingdom of Swaziland pledges the continuation of our support for all initiatives and efforts aimed at resolving that situation and at bringing peace and stability to the Middle East. We sincerely believe that the vital role of the United Nations continues to be critical to the resolution of the Middle East conflict.

The creation of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the great strides that have been taken in the past two years, are a clear indication that we are moving in the right direction. We are convinced that, with the support of the international community and in the spirit of the true partnership that is demonstrated by mutual respect, we shall succeed in our objectives, initiatives and efforts to raise the living standards of our peoples.

We have placed our trust in NEPAD to be the vehicle for that shift away from the underdevelopment and conflict of the past by addressing the fundamental root causes of our problems. The ongoing integration of our initiatives and programmes within the African continent will make possible sustainability and true growth in our economies. Together, in unity of purpose, we shall succeed. In that regard, we welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Advisory Panel on International Support for NEPAD, which will, in our view, help us to be more effective in our efforts to promote Africa's development.

Our united effort is also addressing the conflicts that continue to threaten peace, stability and security on the African continent. We realize that, without those elements, our development goals will continue to elude us, especially because, apart from resources that are wasted on arms, our people can be productive and be able to trade among themselves and with the rest of the

world only under conditions of peace, stability and security.

The establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union is a landmark event in our efforts to manage our conflicts. In particular, allow me to single out for commendation Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts to highlight and address African problems. We look forward to the complete resolution of the dispute in Somalia, and in particular to the resolution of the dispute in the Darfur region of the Sudan.

The complex challenges facing the world today lend greater significance and urgency to initiatives for the reform of our Organization. The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that those reforms are essential if the United Nations is to retain the global credibility and authority that are so necessary to its operations. Our aim must be to transform the Organization into a structure that is truly representative of all Members and that is transparent and efficient in its operations, while remaining consistent with the purposes and objectives of our founding Charter. We believe that achieving balanced representation in the principal organs of the United Nations should be a priority.

In that regard, we support an increase in both permanent and non-permanent seats in the Security Council. The Security Council in particular requires reform in order to strengthen its legitimacy. Its composition must reflect the plurality and diversity of the membership of the United Nations, to recognize the profound geopolitical changes that have taken place in recent history. However, due to a lack of political will on the part of some Members to increase the membership of the Security Council, progress in the reform agenda remains unattainable.

Turning now to the question of development, we believe that the Millennium Declaration marked a turning point in carrying out the mission unanimously entrusted to the United Nations in the area of sustainable development. Indeed, for the first time, heads of State or Government agreed on specific goals and targets in the social, economic and educational fields, up to the year 2015. In our view, the leaders were correct to make the related topics of peace, security, development and poverty eradication priorities to be addressed, because future world stability depends on the ability of national Governments to increase the momentum for economic development and their capacity to improve the delivery of job creation and essential services such as health and education.

Developing countries have been facing special difficulties in responding to the challenges brought about by globalization. As a result, many developing countries, especially the least developed ones, have remained marginalized in the globalizing world economy. Consequently, the benefits of globalization are unevenly distributed. In that regard, the Kingdom of Swaziland believes that in order to maximize the benefits of globalization, the process of integration into the world economy should take into account the level of economic development of each country and the capacity of its institutions and enterprises. In particular, specific national development potentials and socio-economic circumstances, as well as differing initial conditions relating to size, resource endowments, economic structure and location, should be considered. It is also necessary to take into account the specific development, financial and trade needs of developing countries, in view of the fact that there can be no one-size-fits-all trade development strategy.

I believe that I speak on behalf of many from the developing world when I say that small economies are not receiving fair treatment in global trade. The proposed removal of preferential terms for our agricultural products and the continuation of subsidies for such products from the developed world is bound to deal a fatal blow to many of our weak economies. We request understanding and appreciation of our situation by our developed partners. We are asking for a partnership that will take into account our unique situations as developing economies so that we can participate effectively in the global market. For our part, as small economies, we pledge quality and high standards for our products. Our farmers are more than ready to deliver the best to international markets. It should be noted that agricultural incomes are the cornerstone of development for our rural communities.

For our part in the Kingdom of Swaziland, poverty alleviation remains the number-one priority. Sixty-six per cent of our people are living below the internationally recognized poverty line, yet our classification as a lower-middle-income country prevents our access to many of the funds and resources that are available to those in different categories. We will be working with the United Nations to ensure that this situation is corrected.

In the meantime, we are focusing our efforts and available resources on programmes that meet the challenges of poverty in a sustainable and equitable manner. Our national development strategy, which is the result of direct consultation with all stakeholders, has incorporated all eight priority United Nations Millennium Development Goals so as to provide us with a blueprint for government action towards achieving the vision of improving the livelihood of our people by 2022.

Despite all our best efforts and our limited success in many areas, we are restricted in our capacity to meet our objectives due to a multitude of problems that are affecting us simultaneously and that we cannot overcome on our own. As is the case with all developing countries, we are particularly at risk in times of global economic difficulties and are particularly vulnerable to disease and to the effects of changing weather patterns.

Weakening our efforts to meet our development challenges is the threat posed by multiple health hazards, including malaria and tuberculosis, but especially HIV/AIDS. AIDS continues to claim the lives of many of our people. No sector of development has been spared the ravaging impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with enormous strain placed on our financial and human resources as we make the required interventions. We are attacking the enemy on various fronts, with priority on prevention, care, counselling and treatment. Our National Emergency Response Committee has had some success with regard to home-based and community-based care for those already ill as a result of infection.

Unfortunately, we are currently experiencing an exodus of qualified nurses, who are being employed in the developed world. The exodus has adversely affected our capacity-building efforts. That exodus, together with other wider impacts of HIV/AIDS, has dealt our economy a heavy blow.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to make the welfare of children a priority in our development strategy. In that regard, both the Government and the private sector, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have responded with zeal and determination to the plight of orphans and other vulnerable children, resulting from the effects of the pandemic. The Government is providing bursaries for such children in order to ensure that their education is not disrupted. The Government and the business community, in partnership with NGOs, are providing school feeding schemes in order to improve their nutritional balance. We are also using our traditional structures to cater for their material and emotional needs; this includes the provision of local reporting structures to prevent the abuse of those children. The chiefdoms also provide fields where communities grow food for orphans and other vulnerable children.

Let me take this opportunity to express the most profound gratitude of the entire Swazi nation to the United Nations and to all our development partners for the support we continue to receive as we face that killer disease. The support we have received from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria continues to prop up and sustain our programmes and strategies in our fight against this scourge. Fellow members, we shall be forever grateful to you all.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is fully committed to the principles of good governance and the rule of law. The nation has just completed debating the Kingdom's draft constitution, and the draft will soon be submitted to Parliament for final consideration before the end of this year.

For more than 30 years, the Kingdom of Swaziland has been enjoying excellent relations with a nation which, despite an outstanding record in international development assistance and despite fulfilling every requirement for membership in the Organization, is nonetheless excluded from participation in the activities of the United Nations. I am referring here to the issue of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan, who are denied the right to contribute to the global initiatives undertaken by this world body. The Government and the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan have made enormous advances in economic, social and political terms, and they have shown themselves ready and able to share their experience and advice with all the nations of the world. The Kingdom of Swaziland, therefore, proposes to the Assembly that the time has come to revisit this issue so as to ensure the inclusion of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the activities of the United Nations and its associated agencies.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express the deep gratitude of His Majesty the King, the Indlovukazi, the Government and the people of Swaziland to the United Nations and

its agencies for the many programmes of assistance undertaken in the Kingdom of Swaziland since our independence.

We believe that the United Nations, as the only truly global Organization, remains the only hope for overcoming the many complex challenges facing the world today. Despite the setbacks, and despite the obstacles to achieving our collective aims, there can be no doubt that the world could be a more troubled place without the combined efforts of all of us. The Kingdom of Swaziland, therefore, takes great pride in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and ideals set out in the Charter, and we ask Almighty God to watch over and guide us in the challenging times ahead for our Organization.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Petros Molyviatis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Molyviatis (Greece): Mr. President, I would like to begin by congratulating you upon your election to your challenging office. Under your able guidance, the Assembly will take forward its relentless pursuit of peace, security and prosperity throughout the world. I can assure you of Greece's unwavering support in your efforts. Our thanks go also to the outgoing president, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his exemplary efforts and achievements in revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, as well as on many other issues.

The Greek Government fully subscribes to the statement delivered two days ago by the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union (EU) (see A/59/PV.3), as well as to the EU priorities presented to this General Assembly.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, events of great importance changed the world we live in. From the most shocking tragedy of 11 September 2001 to the bombing attacks in Madrid and the recent acts of unspeakable brutality in Beslan, a dark parade of acts of blind violence has caused immense human suffering.

This has increased our responsibility and cemented our will to work in solidarity for a safer, fairer world. Fighting international terrorism has become the most pressing task among our priorities. In that fight, we must prevail. Besides the scourge of terrorism, however, there are many other challenges and grave problems that afflict humanity. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, human trafficking, organized crime, failing States, environmental catastrophes, social and economic crises, pandemic diseases, large-scale humanitarian disasters, hunger and poverty constitute the core problems we have to face in solidarity regardless of our geography, culture or religion.

Last year, the Secretary-General announced the creation of a High-Level Panel of eminent persons to assess the new threats and challenges and to suggest ways to deal with them, including through reform of the multilateral international system. We fully support those efforts. We are eager to contribute constructively, to the best of our ability, towards making the United Nations as effective as possible for the twenty-first century.

(*spoke in French*)

The major challenges and threats confronting us are a source of profound concern — for us and for the peoples we represent. Nonetheless, it is my conviction that, at any cost, we must avoid being drawn into pessimism and anxiety about the future. I share with millions of people worldwide the hope, optimism and determination that were recently seen during the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Athens.

In Athens, athletes of the world devoted their efforts to a noble cause and showed us that competition does not necessarily mean tension, friction, crisis or conflict. To the contrary, they proved that the aspirations of all sides can not only coexist peacefully but can also lead to a strengthening of friendship, solidarity and cooperation among individuals and nations.

The ancient ideal of the Olympic Truce embodies modern humanity's hope for the peaceful settlement of the conflicts ravaging the world. The General Assembly has, on many occasions, unanimously endorsed the Olympic Truce and has appealed to Member States to respect it during the Games. It is now a question of transforming that appeal into a tangible reality.

(*spoke in English*)

Multilateral cooperation is the safest way to a better world. We all should contribute to the enhancement and effectiveness of the international multilateral system. In that context, Greece fully shares the view of the Secretary-General that we have to

move rapidly from the existing culture of reaction to one of prevention.

The peaceful resolution of all disputes at an early stage, on the basis of the United Nations Charter, is of fundamental importance to my country. We strongly believe that the United Nations system of conflict prevention and its preventive potential should be further enhanced to respond better to future challenges.

Peace and development are two mutually reinforcing sides of the same coin. Persistent poverty cheats nations out of progress and provides a breeding ground for both internal and regional crises. Four years ago, with the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, a landmark decision was taken to embark upon long-term global evolution. We committed ourselves to achieve by the year 2015 the Goals that were set. It would be a disgrace to mankind if we did not succeed in bringing about stable and sustainable development and in eradicating hunger and poverty.

However, there are growing indications that, despite some progress, we are lagging in fulfilling agreed targets. Collectively, we have to explore new, innovative ways of financing development. Particular attention should be paid to the development problems of Africa and of small island States.

In line with the Millennium Declaration, and despite the enormous outlay of resources necessary to finance the Olympic Games and their security, Greece has made a point of increasing its development assistance.

In the context of that effort, Greece welcomes the proposals to combat hunger and poverty made by the President of Brazil and co-sponsored by France, Chile, Argentina and Spain. We shall continue to work towards a constructive and effective system that will allow smooth cooperation between recipients and donors and between developing and developed countries.

A close look at Greece's immediate neighbourhood reveals that, despite the considerable progress made over the last few years, the situation still remains fragile in parts of the western Balkans. Unemployment and the lack of economic prospects are in some cases a social and political time bomb. The situation in Kosovo remains a source of instability.

With the proactive support and involvement of the international community, we are working hard to transform the Balkans into a region of democracy, peace, stability and prosperity, focused on a common European future. We believe that genuinely regional initiatives such as the South-East European Cooperation Process constitute the appropriate vehicle to enable participating countries to coordinate their efforts towards reform, progress and good neighbourliness.

In recent years, the climate of our bilateral relations with Turkey has been constantly improving. Both the Greek and the Turkish Governments have undertaken sincere efforts to set bilateral relations on a new track. We note with satisfaction the progress achieved so far in certain areas of our bilateral cooperation and express our determination to expand it further. It is in that spirit that we clearly support Turkey's European perspective.

In Cyprus, reunification remains our unwavering goal through a mutually agreed, lasting, fair and functional settlement, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the plan of the Secretary-General and compatible with the European Union Community *acquis* and European Union principles.

During the last 30 years of military occupation of more than one third of the territory of Cyprus, Greece has strongly supported every attempt and initiative by the United Nations, including the most recent one, for the achievement of a just, viable and functional solution of the Cyprus problem. Unfortunately, the last round of talks did not lead to an agreed comprehensive solution. In the referendum, which followed in April, an overwhelming majority of Greek Cypriots rejected a specific version of the Annan plan, but they still deeply cherish the goal of a reunited island.

The international community can contribute decisively in that direction by keeping the window for a solution open and by avoiding any action which could lead to the deepening of the division of the island or could fail to provide incentives for its reunification.

The horizon over the Middle East remains dark. The Greek Government is convinced that only the implementation of the road map can lead to the two-State solution: Israel and Palestine coexisting in peace and security. Half measures can only complicate matters and add new sources of tension. Essential progress in the peace process cannot be achieved without a comprehensive cessation of all kinds of violence, especially violence directed against civilians. Terrorism cannot be a weapon to achieve political

goals, and terrorist attacks cannot be justified by any means.

As to Iraq, we are deeply committed to the territorial integrity and unity of the country in a federal system. We are deeply worried by the ongoing violence, and we hope for progress in the political process, which will lead to a stable and prosperous democratic country, allowing all of its citizens to enjoy the fruits of peace and exploit the country's enormous potential.

(*spoke in French*)

In the light of the great challenges on the African continent, we note with great satisfaction the dedication shown and the results achieved by the African Union, an organization that is only 3 years old. Greece and its European partners want to help to improve Africa's prospects through development assistance, humanitarian assistance and logistical support. Moreover, we support the prospect of strengthened political cooperation with African countries and with the continent's regional organizations.

I take this opportunity to express the congratulations of my Government and of the Greek people on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of democracy in the Republic of South Africa, a historic event of pan-African significance.

(*spoke in English*)

My country has applied for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2005-2006. I wish to express our deep appreciation to the members of the Group of Western European and other States for their endorsement. Elections are taking place in a few weeks' time. We are asking for the support of the Assembly, which we would greatly appreciate. Let me assure Members that we shall respect its mandate and that we remain strongly committed to contributing constructively to the maintenance of peace and security and to the preservation of the multilateral order.

Greece remains completely devoted to the promotion of democratic principles of government, the peaceful resolution of disputes, strict adherence to international law and respect for human rights. We are determined, should we be elected, to devote all our efforts and all our capacity to fulfilling that responsibility and honouring the trust of this Assembly of all nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Franco Frattini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Frattini (Italy): This year's general debate unfolds against an international backdrop in which terrorist acts of great ferocity have become all too common. The latest, heinous form of terrorism is hostage-taking, which has caused deep sorrow to many of our nations. Again and again, the international community has been caught off guard, unable to respond quickly or effectively. New humanitarian catastrophes have afflicted some of the world's poorest peoples. Difficult stabilization processes are still under way in many regions where the international community is implementing United Nations resolutions.

Some areas of the world have seen economic and social progress. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that entire regions — especially in Africa — are crippled by poverty, malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. That is why Italy takes a leading role in combating those ills in multilateral forums and through bilateral means.

Our peoples demand security. We must join forces to strengthen international cooperation and to confront the common threat of terrorist organizations. The false prophets of terror are able to spread their message of death as a result of ignorance among cultures. To counter their distortions, we should mobilize people's consciences and strengthen dialogue among civilizations with different histories but shared values and a common belief in human dignity.

Peace and development — the agenda of security and human promotion — are related goals that require a coordinated approach carried out through multilateral institutions and in a spirit of equal partnership with developing countries. In that regard, I would like to stress the fundamental importance of a major event that will take place in 2005. That initiative will be a unique opportunity for a comprehensive review of progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

In our globalized, interdependent world, international organizations are expected to provide leadership not only through abstract formulations of general principles, but also through effective, shared initiatives supported by broad consensus. Our priority is to strengthen the multilateral system and to reinvigorate the role of the United Nations. That is the responsibility that the Secretary-General set out for us

at the last session of the General Assembly. There are two conditions for success: a sounder understanding of the threats we face and a broad consensus on the policies aimed at confronting them. Effective multilateralism depends much more on political will and shared goals than on structures and procedures.

The multilateral system — which demands responsibility and commitment — is judged by the results it enables us to achieve. That is why the whole international community must be involved, starting with the States that command greater resources and capabilities. Multilateral decisions can be difficult, but that is no excuse for inaction.

The starting point for United Nations reform is a review of the Organization's policies. Italy welcomes the reform of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building, which we — as the sixth largest contributor to the United Nations budget and one of the top contributors of troops to peacekeeping operations over the past 10 years — support. Strengthening that critical sector will help to prevent the recurrence of conflicts, to consolidate the gains of peace, to re-establish the rule of law and to guarantee freedom for all. Italy will also continue to support the growing financial, operational and training demands of new missions, particularly in Africa — here, I am also thinking about the New Partnership for Africa's Development — and elsewhere.

Crisis management is a United Nations priority that demands greater coordination of its components and a stronger commitment on the part of Member States to protect human beings and to uphold their dignity. We thus look forward to the report of the Panel of Eminent Personalities appointed by the Secretary-General. The membership will have to examine it and discuss its recommendations thoroughly and openly.

A firm agreement on the policies of the United Nations must be upheld by institutions that enjoy the consensus and participation of the membership. We are encouraged by the results achieved so far with regard to improving the functioning of the General Assembly.

On Security Council reform, we have not yet been able to find an agreement that reconciles the various approaches on the table. That should not deter us from seeking solutions that are not divisive. Any decision imposed upon Member States would seriously undermine the credibility of the Council and the legitimacy of its action. Confronted with global challenges of great magnitude, the international community cannot afford profound divisions within its ranks.

Italy is in favour of a Security Council reform inspired by the principles of greater inclusiveness, effectiveness, democratic participation and geographic representation, starting with the developing countries. We are firmly convinced that the best way to pursue such a reform is to establish new non-permanent seats. Since States would occupy those seats on the basis of periodic elections, they would be accountable to the general membership.

Some Member States, however, have advocated the addition of new permanent seats — for themselves. We do not believe the Council's difficulties can be resolved through new permanent, irrevocable appointments and national mandates. Such a move would sow division, frustration, and perhaps disengagement, among the membership. Important areas of the world would be left without representation. For one, there would be no seat at the Council table for the Arab and Islamic world. Can the international community really afford this at a time when we are trying to broaden the dialogue among different faiths and cultures?

On the other hand, if a broad consensus emerges with full respect for the sovereign equality of all Member States, we are willing to contemplate more frequent rotation or longer terms for countries that make a greater contribution to the objectives of the United Nations. Should reflections of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change be driven by such a bold and innovative approach, we would strongly support their endeavour. I am convinced that many other countries would also be ready to accept it.

In addition, a closer relationship should be built between elected members and their regional groups. That would enhance the accountability of elected members and would make the Council more representative and its deliberations more legitimate.

Already in San Francisco in 1945 the founding fathers recognized the importance of regional organizations, whose relations with the United Nations are governed by Chapter VIII of the Charter, and whose role has grown steadily in the years that followed. Increasingly, States belonging to the same region have felt a sense of common responsibility for crises affecting them all. Moreover, regional

arrangements provide small to mid-size States with a greater say in the decisions of international forums.

More should be done to express those realities at the United Nations and in the Security Council. As a founding member of the European Union, the depositary of its treaties and the host for the solemn signature of the new European Constitution, Italy believes that today's 25-member European Union has a fundamental contribution to make to the objectives of the United Nations. We have always worked to allow the European Union to speak with a single, more influential, voice. We realize, of course, that we are dealing with a gradual process. Nevertheless, we must stay the course and not jeopardize the achievement of our goal in the interests of all Europeans.

Let me conclude with a final, strong appeal to States Members. Let us join forces, abandon national ambitions and seek the least divisive ways to enhance multilateralism. That is the only way the international community can meet the global challenges of the new millennium. In deciding between the satisfaction of the few and the inclusion of the many, the wrong choice is a luxury that the United Nations — at the very heart of the international system — can ill afford to make.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Michel Barnier, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France.

Mr. Barnier (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. We are pleased that a man of your ability, a Francophone representative of a friendly country, is directing our proceedings.

I also wish to warmly applaud our Secretary-General. We have heard his message on respect for the rule of law. And through the Secretary-General, I wish to commend the entire staff of this institution, here and everywhere in the world: their courage and commitment are a credit to our ideals and to the organizations they serve — sadly, sometimes at the cost of their own lives.

How are we to meet the challenges facing the world? That is the question we all keep asking ourselves, one after another, from this rostrum. And how are we to meet the world's expectations unless we all mobilize? More than ever, the United Nations remains the one irreplaceable, legitimate framework for harnessing that mobilization and translating it into collective action.

We have much to do: conflicts remain unresolved, while others are breaking out; poverty is declining all too slowly; people are destroyed by wars; refugees are torn from their land; and the threat of terrorism is not fading. Yes, we have much to do. Yes, we have a duty to act, and an obligation never to give up.

The United Nations is acting — on all fronts, on the front line. To resolve conflicts and prevent them from flaring up again, it is present everywhere, on all continents, in Haiti, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Côte d'Ivoire, Afghanistan and many other fronts, deploying over 50,000 Blue Helmets. It provides assistance to 17 million people protected by the High Commissioner for Refugees. Through the World Food Programme, it feeds more than 100 million individuals. And it helps, especially through the United Nations Development Programme, 170 States or territories to develop.

United Nations activities — our activities — continue to expand. Thus, the Organization is called upon to be at the centre of the counter-terrorism measures that the international community is putting in place. The threat of terrorism, now a global one, calling for a global response. That is why France committed itself here to the fight, and did so again recently by supporting the strengthening of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The tragedy of 11 September, which I refer to with feeling here in New York City, was an attack on us all. Since then, terrorism has continued to strike: in Europe, in Madrid, six months ago; and in Asia, in Bali and Jakarta. Cowardly attacks are mounted against the weakest. How can we not be appalled at the tragedy of the school in Beslan where children — the symbol of innocence — were violently massacred?

We are waging a merciless fight against terrorism. Let us at the same time address its roots. That means putting an end to situations that terrorists exploit; giving the world's excluded hope again; restoring dignity to those peoples deprived of it; and ensuring that dialogue and cooperation among civilizations, cultures and religions prevail, rather than conflict and intolerance.

Global threats require a strong, and always collective, response. The threat of proliferation, which

could merge with that of terrorism, calls for resolute and sustained action. The non-proliferation regime has been seriously undermined by the combined action of certain States and non-State actors. That is why strengthening existing instruments is today essential. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference in 2005 will be an opportunity to do so.

A safer and freer world is, first, a more just world. That is why we must act relentlessly to resolve conflicts. I am, of course, thinking, first and foremost, of the Middle East, where — in the wake of the hopes raised by Madrid, Oslo, Camp David and Taba — the absence of any prospect is today breeding despair, extremism and violence of every kind. This central crisis can be resolved only through a negotiated settlement based on international law, enabling all the peoples — I repeat, all the peoples — of the region to live in dignity and security.

The road map, which the parties have accepted and which the Security Council has endorsed, must be implemented in full and in good faith. France hopes that the withdrawal from Gaza is a first step in that direction. It will make every effort to get the peace process under way again. It will continue to act vis-à-vis all the leaders — the elected and legitimate leaders — of that region.

Let us make no mistake: building peace in the Middle East is a historic responsibility for our generation. Europe — the European Union — in partnership with the United States, Russia and the United Nations, is determined to play a political role in order to stimulate this process.

In Iraq, violence is exploding. It seems to us that only when the Iraqis themselves take control of their future, and when the political process provided for by the Security Council is pursued, will the country be able to escape the chaos that is destabilizing the entire region. France, as everyone knows, did not approve of the conditions in which the conflict was unleashed. Neither today nor tomorrow will it commit itself militarily in Iraq. However, it reaffirms its willingness, with its European partners, to assist the Iraqi people in rebuilding their country and in restoring their institutions.

Who can fail to see that, in the Middle East, everything is fragile and everything is interconnected? Who can fail to understand that the only path — everywhere — is sovereignty and justice for peoples? Only then will they make progress towards peace and the economic and political modernization to which they are entitled.

Africa, too, is where we will win or lose the battle for justice. Without justice, there will be no peace. Without peace, there will be no lasting development. The future of the African continent, and its stability and development, are a vital objective for us all.

Today, with the impetus of the United Nations, longstanding crises have been, or will be, settled — Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Others, however, have broken out, and together we must prevent them from worsening or spreading: in Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, and Darfur. The Great Lakes region is slow to find the path to peace, just as the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is slow to die, and the Somali question remains to be resolved.

On that great continent, which is undergoing profound change, facing real threats but also considerable potential, political leaders are today demonstrating a genuine determination to commit to working to resolve conflicts and crises. That can be seen from the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); the resolute commitment of the African Union on the political front and in the field; and the growing role of regional organizations. We resolutely support that commitment. For development, but also for peace-building, we wish to bring about the conditions for an effective and coherent partnership between North and South.

Given the magnitude of the goals and needs of the continent, I firmly believe in the importance of pooling the efforts of the Europeans with those of our African partners, under United Nations auspices, whenever necessary. I am convinced that our experience of European integration — without attempting to teach any lessons — can simply be useful to that continent, and that is the sense of the statement made on our behalf by the representative of the presidency of the European Union, Bernard Bot, before the Assembly the day before yesterday.

France has long been involved in strengthening African peacekeeping capacities. Today, the European Union intends to make a commitment immediately and with determination. Operation Artemis, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is proof of that

commitment. The creation of the European Peace Facility now provides major support to African organizations. We are willing, if the African Union so wishes, to assist it in its action for peace, as in the Sudan.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Justice and conflict prevention cannot be dissociated from collective action to promote development. The Millennium Goals — to which the developing countries, donor States and multilateral institutions are committed — are an overriding obligation for us all, especially the wealthiest countries.

More than $50 billion a year is still needed to achieve those objectives — a fact of which we all are aware. On Monday, 100-odd countries endorsed the New York Declaration on Action Against Hunger and Poverty. Together they ask that additional resources be provided for development, including through innovative mechanisms. This is a powerful movement, launched in this very forum of the United Nations, aimed at generating the necessary resources for justice and for development. It is an important milestone. My country is proud to have contributed to it, through the voice of the President of the Republic, and it will continue to do so.

But France is also fighting for a more controlled, and therefore most just, globalization that would give everyone a chance. We advocate the establishment of a political body, in which the United Nations must have its due place — to improve coordination of multilateral action in the economic, social and environmental fields and to provide the necessary impetus. This is one of the major issues that we must consider in coming months, especially on the basis of the proposals that the Panel on reform is expected to make.

Again, a more just world is a world that respects human dignity and freedom. Fundamental human rights are universal. Each man, woman and child has these inherent rights, and it is up to us to see that they thrive and are respected.

It is also up to us to fight firmly and uncompromisingly against all manifestations of violence and discrimination based on race, origin, gender or religion. Our resolve in the area of human rights, as elsewhere, must remain absolute and constant. I mean that we need a genuine dialogue with the civil society and with all non-governmental organizations. The time has come, it seems to us, to conclude the negotiation of a conventional instrument on forced disappearances, to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and to mobilize against all forms of modern slavery.

Let us not rule out the use of force, in certain cases and on the appeal of victims, to prevent massive human rights violations and acts of violence against civilians. The Security Council has the honour of assuming this responsibility, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Let us also continue putting in place mechanisms to combat impunity, often the prerequisite for durable peace and lasting reconciliation. The establishment of the International Criminal Court specifically meets this objective. We welcome the major milestone reached with the entry into force of the Rome Statute.

The dignity of humankind and peoples also requires due respect for cultures in their diversity. The sense of loss of identity contributes to the frustrations that breed a good many conflicts. The unity of the international community, it goes without saying, cannot be synonymous with uniformity.

The negotiation of a convention on cultural diversity, which has just started at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is, therefore, in our view, a key objective. It must produce a concrete result, as planned, before the 2005 general conference.

Our planet is dangerous; it is also in danger. The earth is showing signs of strain; we are not maintaining it; in fact, we are plundering it; the climate is deteriorating. And yet, we should remember, scarcity of resources has at all times been a factor in conflict. For the future of our children, we must act while there is still time.

Is there among us, for that matter, one single issue that more obviously ignores borders than ecology and ecological security and requires coordinated action — that is, multilateral action? International governance in environmental matters is, it seems to us, inadequate today. We must simplify and strengthen the existing international regime on environmental issues, develop monitoring, and early warning expertise, and increase financing, especially for developing countries.

Let us be clear-sighted. For the environment, as for so many other issues, prevention costs less than

cure. In this regard, we hope the establishment of a United Nations organization for the environment will be considered, based on the achievements of the United Nations Environment Programme. We propose that this great undertaking, which is one of the Millennium Goals, be on the agenda of the September 2005 summit.

In a world — our world — where 800 million people do not have enough to eat, where more financial resources are devoted to weapons than to development, where millions of men, women and children are forced to leave their land to escape destitution or massacres, the international community has a duty to act and to show imagination. It is here at the United Nations where we can meet to take initiatives, to fight misfortune and to apportion the tasks, all of them urgent.

The United Nations system, which is unique and more indispensable than ever, also has an obligation to reform itself to meet new needs and new threats, and to make the most of new technologies merely in order to live in our times. The Secretary-General got down to this problem at the start of his first mandate. Considerable work has already been done. The proposals of the high-level panel will be the basis for the next, still more ambitious, stages. France has made proposals on many issues, such as peacekeeping operations, human rights and development financing.

We have also indicated, with Germany, how the representativity and legitimacy of Security Council action might be improved. We advocate enlargement in both categories of members, permanent and non-permanent; and we have expressed support for the aspirations of Germany, Japan, Brazil and India, which should be accompanied by a country from Africa.

In a complex and unpredictable world, it is our joint responsibility to maintain and strengthen the one institution where all nations can work together, where they can unite to shape and control their common destiny. Through its legitimacy and ever-increasing effectiveness, the United Nations must be the instrument of universal conscience for which it remains the crucible.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. M. Morshed Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Mr. Khan (Bangladesh): Sir, allow me to congratulate you most warmly on your well-deserved election. I am confident you will build upon the excellent work done by your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, and lead us to a very successful outcome of this session. Special tribute is due to our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for his dedicated leadership.

In Bangladesh, we believe that the United Nations provides an essential political and diplomatic framework for the actions of all its Members, including the most powerful. The use of force without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council cannot render the United Nations meaningless. We laud the United Nations for its strong advocacy against unilateralism in the interest of a just global order. Our spontaneous endorsement of this principle is in conformity with the fundamentals of our foreign policy.

The United Nations is not only a system for providing collective security. It is also a comprehensive international network of systems. It deals with the work of myriad specialized agencies, establishing norms, standards, codes and guidelines and buttressing the rule of law and the rights of individuals. It embraces the world's trading, financial and monetary systems and promotes the cause of development. In our globalized world, there is no substitute for the United Nations. It is the only forum that can deal with the cooperative management of problems that recognize no frontiers.

The thirtieth anniversary of our admission to the United Nations this year marks a major milestone in our partnership with the Organization. It is a sobering moment as much as it is one for rejoicing; for it is a record of our progress as a sovereign independent State. From the very outset, Bangladesh pursued two pre-eminent objectives, strengthening responsibility at home and enhancing our contribution abroad. Our relationship with the United Nations has been mutually rewarding in promoting peace and advancing development.

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman laid the foundations of our national development in the late 1970s. His philosophy embraced reinforcing democracy with development. Our achievements are largely due to this pursuit. It reflects our commitment to human rights, good governance and empowerment of the poor, especially women. Innovative ideas flowing from our own intellectual resources were harnessed, with the cooperation and support of our development partners and, of course, the United Nations system. A free press and a vibrant civil society

backed our efforts. The outcome was positive: it was to invoke what the World Bank described as the silent revolution that is Bangladesh. We are aware that much more remains to be done.

Natural disasters have often proved to be impediments to our development. The excessive flooding this year is a case in point. Two thirds of the country was under water, and many lives were lost. Over 2 million people became homeless and our infrastructure sustained severe damage. Better preparedness prevented greater losses. The courage and resilience of the Bangladeshi people in facing the situation were indeed remarkable. We deeply appreciate the support and solidarity that we received from the international community this time.

The peculiarities of our geography render flooding a seasonal occurrence. It is therefore imperative that we seek measures that will address this recurrent problem in a sustained and enduring manner, through proper management of the water resources in the region. In the final analysis, long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction measures also require international support.

Despite those occasional setbacks, we in Bangladesh can point to progress in a number of important social and economic fields. Poverty reduction has been a central goal. We have reduced population growth by half, curbed child mortality by a third, achieved food self-sufficiency for our people, improved sanitation standards with home-grown methods, and reduced ozone-depleting substances and vehicular pollution overall. Education has remained a major thrust of our Government's policy. Our school enrolment rates are among the highest in the developing world, particularly for girls. Free schooling for girl children, gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women have helped create a vibrant and progressive society. In addition, ideas like micro-credit and non-formal education have made famous beginnings in Bangladesh.

We would be happy to share our experiences with other comparable societies, and the United Nations can be an effective conduit for doing so. We encourage the United Nations in its role as a locator, collator and transmitter of best practices. That is how the United Nations can really help developing countries, by passing the litmus test of relevance, not in drafts and declarations alone but also in operations and implementation.

The past decade has witnessed many important United Nations conferences focused on our critical aspirations. The leaders of the world agreed on the Millennium Development Goals. However, the success of the Goals will largely depend on an enabling international economic environment, particularly in the areas of trade, finance, official development assistance and technology transfer.

Extreme poverty is a gross denial of human rights. The disturbing experiences of recent years, including the rise in senseless terrorism, warn us that failure in development is not an option, that poverty can breed extremism and that to rid the world of its tragic consequences effectively its root causes must be addressed.

In today's world, trade remains a crucial vanguard for development. Our active participation in the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development conforms to that maxim. Unhindered market access and special and preferential treatment for the products of developing countries should be at the heart of multilateral negotiations.

Managed migration is an important phenomenon. However, the root causes of cross-border migratory flows need to be addressed in earnest.

Greater focus must be placed on the full implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. The goals of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Monterrey Consensus should be pursued with determination.

While it is important to set targets, it may be more important to create the means to achieve them. For the cause of development to progress, we need an environment of peace worldwide. Sadly, that is still lacking in many parts of the world.

We are concerned about the persistent violence in Iraq. We are encouraged by the return of the United Nations to the scene. We now expect the United Nations to play a central role in facilitating the democratic process and in the reconstruction and humanitarian work in that country.

In Afghanistan, the holding of a successful election next month will be critical to the country's stability.

Our people cherish their close bond of friendship with the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. We pray that their travails will be over soon.

A core issue in the Middle East remains the unresolved problem of Palestine. The Palestinians have suffered far too much for far too long, and the wall now only exacerbates that suffering. Perhaps there can be a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with an independent Palestine that has East Jerusalem as its capital. Until that is achieved, there must be respect for international law, and all peoples in the region must be able to live in peace and security, free from violence, destruction and acts of terror.

Wherever it has been possible, Bangladesh has not fought shy of contributing to post-conflict stability. We have always done so under the aegis of the United Nations. We are near the top of the list of participating countries with regard to peacekeeping. Over the past 20 years, we have been involved in 28 United Nations peacekeeping operations across 4 continents. Currently, we are participating in 12 of the 16 United Nations missions. We have done so because we see this as advancing our role and perception as a constructive and stabilizing international actor. We do not do it out of convenience; we do it out of our conviction.

We believe that there is a direct relationship between disarmament and development. Bangladesh is party to all major international conventions and treaties on disarmament. Our geographical location makes nuclear weapons a direct and legitimate cause for concern to us in the South Asia region. Bangladesh therefore supports all measures, partial and otherwise, towards arms control and conventional and nuclear disarmament.

Bangladesh has condemned international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We remain an active coalition partner in the war against terrorism.

Bangladesh has been playing an active role in many important committees and commissions of the United Nations. We believe that the reform of the General Assembly and the Security Council that is currently being discussed can truly help re-energize the system and enable those institutions to reflect the realities of the contemporary world. Consultations should be broad-based and should not be guided by the perceived interests of a few alone. Bangladesh believes that any increase in the membership of the Council should be based on certain criteria, including respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the aspirant's contribution to international peace and security, its proven track-record in democracy, its compliance with United Nations resolutions, its avowed commitment to nuclear disarmament, its profile as a major partner in development and its contribution as a voice of economically disadvantaged countries. Bangladesh believes that the ultimate focus of any reform exercise should be on enhancing the Council's credibility and democratic profile through its working methods and its decision-making processes.

The quest for world order must begin at our own doorstep. Bangladesh is committed to maintaining the credibility of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to provide its socio-economic mandate and to reduce tension and create a broad-based climate of confidence-building. Bangladesh will take over as chairperson of the thirteenth SAARC summit in January, next year. The occasion will mark the 20th anniversary of SAARC, and we look forward to celebrating the occasion with due solemnity as well as maintaining positive and forward-moving momentum. Our overarching commitment, of course, remains poverty alleviation. All in all, we aspire to expand our collective agenda for peace, progress and development in South Asia and beyond.

I firmly believe that nations big and small, weak and powerful, all need the United Nations as much as the United Nations needs them. It is only by combining our endeavours and uniting our resolve that we will be able to achieve our objectives of peace, security and development.

The power of humanity does not lie in the size of its armies but rather in the strength of its ideas, not in its ability to destroy but in its capability to build, not in its tendencies to despair, but in its propensities for hope. Our ability to tap this power for our own benefit will shape our future in these times marked by difficulties but also possibilities.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.